

A little boy is always teasing the girls in the school yard at Saint Jerome's Catholic School, and making ugly faces so they will cry. His teacher, Sister Mary Thomas, decides one day to try some psychology on him.

She approaches him very sweetly and says, *'When I was a young girl my mother told me if I kept making ugly faces, my face would freeze some day and the ugly face would stay forever.'*

The little boy stops, looks at her very carefully, and sincerely responds, *'Gee Sister, looks like you didn't listen to her.'*

Our wounds, as much as our fingerprints, identify us. They are **unique**, and we **all** have them. When we try to **rid** ourselves of our **wounds**, they **never** have a chance to **heal**. They, instead, **fester** and **unduly** influence us to **think** of ourselves as someone **other** than **God** creates us to be. We tend to **think** of ourselves as **ugly damaged goods**, and **shame** leads us to do **everything** that we can to **hide** our **wounds** from ourselves and others.

When we **practice** living with our **wounds**, they - somehow - **heal**. This is **not** to say that we **readily rejoice** that we are **wounded**. Our **willingness to practice** living with our **wounds** does **remind** us, however, that we are **more than our wounds**. The level of **shame** is **dramatically** reduced, and the **freedom** to live **openly** increases.

Then, there is, of course, still the matter of the **scars** that our **wounds** leave. They too can be a **source** of **shame** or a **pathway** for **healing** in ourselves and in others. **Jesus**, in our gospel story from **John**, **models** for us a **willingness to practice** living with our **wounds** and accepting our **scars**. He does not take **offense** - as some of us might - when **Thomas** mentions his **wounds** and **scars**. He, instead, **uses** them to help **Thomas** grow and

develop... that is, to help him **release** his **grasp** on the **reality** that **Jesus** is **dead** - **period**.

Many of us **struggle** with **letting go** of our **wounds** and do everything we can to **hide** our **scars**. We want to **get rid of** and **forget** them, and we - often **unconsciously** - **worry** them **causing** them to remain **painful reminders**. We tend, as a result, to quickly **take offense**, and to **accuse** others. We attempt to **overcome** our **shame** by **driving** ourselves to be **successful**, to **achieve** evermore **accolades** and **honors**, and to be thought **important**. We find **excuses** for ourselves as we **slip** evermore deeply into **addictive behavior**.

Resurrection - we are told - **transforms** our bodies. We use terms like *glorify* to describe the body of **Jesus** after he is raised from the dead. This doesn't mean, however, that the **wounds** and **scars** are **removed**. No, they **remain** and become an important way by which others **recognize** us. It does mean, **though**, that **transformation** (which is the same thing as **healing**) removes **feelings of shame** that usually **accompany** our **wounds** and **scars**.

Jesus (because he feels **no shame** and **doesn't take offense** at **Thomas'** demand) is **free** to invite **Thomas** to **examine** his **wounds** and **scars**, and to **know** that he truly is **alive**. This **frees Thomas** from the **guilt** and **shame** that he **feels** because - like the other disciples - he too **knows** the **wound** caused by his **abandonment** of **Jesus**. The **resistance** that he uses to **hide** his **wound** and the **shame** associated with it, is **replace** by a **joy** that comes from **knowing** that he is **loved**.

The **wounds** that become **scars** on the body of **Jesus** always remain to **help** us also to **know** the **freedom** that comes from **knowing** that we are **loved**.